

John O'Clairish

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LETTERS FROM A TEACHER TO HER YOUNG FEMALE FRIEND, JUST
ABOUT COMMENCING TO KEEP SCHOOL.

No. V.

My dear L— : The next things to be explained are the parallels of latitude, and the meridians of longitude. But to make these perfectly understood, you must first give some instruction about circles, and their division into 360 degrees, or parts. Tell your children that the language of numbers is the same all over the world, and however difficult it may be for distant nations to understand each other's words, they all have the same figures. If it were not so, there would be great confusion, and irremediable mistakes in commercial intercourse. There is a different word in every language for the number 100, but the figures mean the same thing every where. So, in regard to many other things, the same signs are understood alike by all nations. It has been agreed to divide circles into 360 parts, called *degrees*, all the world over, for the sake of convenience. Draw upon your black-board two or three circles within each other, called *concentric circles*. Divide the inner one carefully into four parts, by lines extending outward from the centre, called *radii*, and say,—“This circle is now divided into quarters, or quadrants; and, all circles being divided into 360 degrees, each one of these quadrants will measure 90 degrees.” Let the scholars find this result by a calculation in their heads, or upon the black-board. Then point to the globe, and tell them that latitude, which you now intend to explain, is the distance of a place from the equator, north or south, and that it can never be more than 90 degrees, because the distance from the equator to either pole measures exactly a quadrant, as they will see by comparing the circle you have divided, with the globe. The parallels, (which you will have already drawn at intervals of 10 degrees,) are thus drawn for the convenience of counting the latitude. All the places on one of these parallels are, of course, at the same distance from the equator, and are all east or west of each other. This you can exemplify by cutting a slip of paper long enough to reach from the equator to any one of these parallels; then move it round the globe, and they will see that all the places which fall under the end of it, are at the same distance from the equator, and also at the same distance from the pole. Other lines may be drawn, or imagined, parallel to these; but with the assistance of these alone, the latitude of any place may easily be found.

This is too good an opportunity to be lost, for explaining circles a

little more. Point to those on your black-board, and say, that an angle is formed by the meeting of two straight lines in a point. In a circle it is plain to the eye that there may be four angles with square corners, and that there can be but four. These are called *right angles*. They always measure 90 degrees on the circumference of the circle. At this moment, extend the radii to the circumference of the other circles, and show your pupils that all the circles are divided equally by these same lines, and that the right angles of the larger one measure 90 degrees on the circumference of that circle, like those of the smaller one. Degrees may contain inches or miles, according to the size of the circles; but all circles, from one as small as the circumference of a thimble, or of a pin's head, to one as large as the sphere of the earth, or of the heavens, are divided into the same number of *degrees*, as by that means the proportions of a large circle may be conveniently measured upon a small one. Illustrate this, by saying, that if you place this globe, with its north pole pointing to the polar star in the heavens, you can divide the equinoctial, which is a circle in the heavens corresponding with the equator upon the earth,—or is in the zenith of the equator,—(and here explain the word *zenith*,) exactly in the same proportion as you divide the equator on the globe.

Or, if you hold a pencil upright upon a place 30 degrees from the north pole, it will point to a star or a spot in the heavens 30 degrees from the polar star, &c.

If you are allowed to make such use of the walls of your school-room, you can draw a very large circle upon it, and divide it carefully into 360 degrees, so distinctly that they may easily be seen by your pupils. Draw a small one inside of it also, and divide both into quadrants. They will be useful for reference on a hundred occasions. Explain, now, that any angle less than the right angle is called *acute*; any angle larger than the right angle, *obtuse*; and remember always to show the measurement, in degrees, on the circumference; and keep it in the public mind that it is not the length of the legs of an angle, but the proportion of the circumference of a circle included between them, which constitutes the larger or the smaller angle. This is the very first lesson in proportions, and should be applied to every subject with which it can be associated. It is an essential element in the taste for beauty, as well as of accuracy in measurements; and the cultivation of these should go on together, that science may ever verify beauty, as beauty adorns science. If this principle is observed in education, we shall have fewer minds of disproportionate growth. One element of beauty,—its greatest, noblest element,—is fitness,—adaptation to the end, not on a principle of low utility, but on one of high utility. All attempts at beauty not founded upon this principle, degenerate into the fantastic; they come from false conceptions, and they excite false conceptions, which are not in harmony with the good and the true, with which real beauty is always coincident. The deeper our knowledge becomes, the more clearly we see the beautiful harmonies and analogies of nature, and that one thing verifies or symbolizes another just as far as they are *true*. I do not know any thing that gives one this feeling more inevitably than the law of proportions; and the circle is the most simple diagram to illustrate it. The gratification we experience from perceiving the truths of mathematical science is

of a very high order, and one in which the mind can rest as in a centre. I like to introduce children to this class of conceptions, very early, and I always tell them that these immutable truths have a kind of sacredness, because they are truths; and that, if they learn to understand them, they will acquire an accuracy and uprightness of mind that will assist them, when they need it, to judge upon moral subjects, where the highest aspects of truth are to be seen and venerated. I shall say more about this when I write to you of teaching numbers and geometry; but circles always suggest the whole train of thought to my mind.

Practical geometry will almost grow of itself, out of a clear understanding of circles and angles. While speaking of angles, direct the attention of your scholars to the corners and angles of the apartments, of the furniture, and of any other familiar objects, and require them to tell you what sort of angles these form; let them also give you the measurement in degrees of parts of circles, as well as estimate the degrees of different right, acute, and obtuse angles. After a little practice they will do this very readily, and the thing will be forever fixed in the mind, and ready for application, whenever circumstances shall render it needful. It will also help to cultivate the eye, so important an auxiliary in the study of many sciences. Even from such slight beginnings as these, if you have any latent mathematical talent in your school, it will have a groundwork on which to build. We know that this talent sometimes develops itself without any apparent assistance, and probably without any, besides the eye itself, and the faculty inherent in the mind. This, however, I only mention by the way, as the general improvement of your school is a much more important object of consideration. Great talent generally finds a path for itself, especially if obstacles are cleared away; it is minds of moderate power that need assistance and encouragement.

You now require a meridian upon your globe. One of pasteboard will answer your purpose, though it may not be as convenient as an upright one of brass. Cut a slip of pasteboard that will encompass your globe entirely, and divide it carefully into 360 equal parts. Then fasten it upon your globe with a tack, at each pole, the tack having a large, flat head, so that your globe will revolve within the pasteboard meridian, without tearing it. Now begin at the equator, and mark the numbers by tens on each quadrant, counting towards the poles. These numbers must coincide with the parallels of latitude already drawn. Explain how, by the assistance of this meridian, the latitude of every place marked on the globe may be accurately reckoned. You can let each of your scholars satisfy himself, by trial, mentioning yourself some points of the continents, which they can bring to the meridian, and whose latitude they can reckon themselves.

M.

As the wronging or cherishing of seeds or young plants is that that is most important to their thriving, so the culture or manurance of minds in youth hath such a forcible, though unseen, operation, as hardly any length of time or contention of labor can countervail it afterwards.
—*Lord Bacon.*

SUMMER SCHOOLS.

[For the Common School Journal.]

TO FEMALES PURPOSING TO BECOME TEACHERS.

No. II.

Besides a benevolent spirit and a deep sense of responsibility, in order to success, a teacher should possess firmness, patience, and perseverance. Many, through impatience, fickleness, and indecision, "do lose the good they else might win." They are impatient, and cannot wait even a reasonable time for results. They are changeable, and cannot pursue any plan or system long enough to bring it to maturity, and see its merits; or they have no decision; they cannot *fix* upon any thing; they have no confidence in themselves,—in their own measures, opinions, and plans. They are full of new schemes, and bring nothing to perfection. You cannot, at any time, certainly know what they are doing, or what plan they are attempting to pursue.

The purpose of to-day,
Woven with pains into their plan,
To-morrow rends away.

They have many just views; they adopt many good measures; they are not wanting in good sense, but they settle down steadily in nothing; they pursue nothing continuously, so as to bring out, and be benefited by, its merits. So it turns out, that their schools are ever improving, and never *improved*. As they themselves seem to have no respect for their own measures, it is not strange that their *pupils* should have no confidence in them, or respect for them. When a new measure is adopted, or a new order announced, there is no *certainty*, or even probability, that it will be long followed. Of course it secures no attention. Care is not taken to carry their own laws into effect. Hence they lose their authority, government becomes inefficient, discipline lax, and finally anarchy prevails; and where there is confusion, there is every evil work. Let a similar course be pursued in any other calling or profession,—in the army or in the navy, in farming, merchandise, or mechanics,—and imperfection, embarrassment, and ruin, must ensue.

Suppose, for instance, the farmer sets out to make a series of experiments in order to settle certain unknown or doubtful points in agriculture; let it be to decide the question of succession of crops, the best mode of cultivation, or the adaptation of soils, or even the best time for ploughing, sowing, cutting, and gathering. Let him, I say, attempt to determine any one of these questions. Suppose he institutes a series of experiments, carries them half through, or pursues them half the season, and then suddenly, before a single point is settled, or even a single experiment completed, he changes his plan, and determines to settle another doubtful point, or come at certainty by another and more expeditious method, which he adopts, and for a while, in its turn, pursues; and then suddenly changes *this* for a third, and so on indefinitely. It is obvious there could be but one result to this vacillating course. It must fail. It must bring forth vanity. Just so it must be in merchandise; just so in school keeping; just so, in fine, in every kind of business. I am no enemy to invention, experiment, improvement, but the friend

rather. A wise man must change, and change many times. He will change as often as he sees reason so to do,—even seven times a week. Ordinarily, it is no commendation of a man's head or his heart, to say, "I have held to the same opinions, and kept on in the same unaltered course, for a long series of years." Within such a period, there must have been discoveries and inventions not a few,—new modes and ways, and better ones; and why has he not seen and adopted them? Why has he stood out in defence of the old way, and the old measures, in despite of truth, and reason, and authority? What I mean to discourage is, a scheming, vacillating turn of mind, ready to adopt every new project, or theory, merely because it is new; even to the abandonment of what is now in progress, and before any thing has been brought to maturity.

The changeableness of which I have been speaking arises from a love of novelty and variety, instability of mind, or the want of any settled principles of action. We see measures and schemes sometimes abandoned, not for the purpose of adopting new and better ones, but from an abatement of interest in the whole subject. It is not uncommon to see persons take up theories and measures, and defend and pursue them awhile, with a good deal of vigor, and afterwards abandon them, not for the purpose of pursuing a different course, but from want of a continued interest in them. Such is often the fact with persons of sanguine temperament, and of moderate firmness. This is different from the course I have just been considering, although the result must be nearly the same. With the qualifications of a benevolent heart, a real interest in humanity, an active conscientiousness, a deep sense of responsibility, a spirit of perseverance, together with a thorough acquaintance with the branches to be taught, a teacher may hope to succeed. Look for these qualifications in yourselves. Before you enter on the active duties of teaching, or before you can be successful in teaching, you must find them.

Now, with these feelings, purposes, and qualifications, we will suppose you find yourselves to-morrow, (as some of you may,) in the schoolroom, surrounded with fifty pupils. Have you any settled, definite purposes and plans? Do you know what you would do? *you*, especially, to whom, at no very distant period, this situation may become reality?

Now, just at this crisis, I want to give you a few plain suggestions. And first, it is important to every enterprise that it *begin* well. This gives the best assurance of speedy, sure progress, and a happy termination. You may not possess splendid talents, brilliant attainments; yet, notwithstanding this, you may keep a very good school. Good sense and great kindness, even with a moderate share of what is called genius and learning, will do much to prevent a failure.

I ask, will you have order, and *how* will you secure it? or will you let things take their own course? Will you call in the rod, and premiums, and appeal to fear and emulation? Upon all these points, you should endeavor to come to some definite opinions *now*; you should not wait until you find yourselves within the walls of a schoolroom. Will you have order, system, quiet, industry, progress? or will you prefer idleness, and noise, and confusion? Will you have study hours, when all shall mind their business, and prepare their lessons; and seasons

of recess, when all may run, and play, and jump, and talk, and laugh? or shall all times and seasons be alike,—leaving every scholar to talk when, and what, and how, he pleases? Do you mean to be among your pupils as one having authority, and be obeyed, or to be lightly esteemed? Come to a decision on these points. Your failure or success depends vastly more upon this, than upon being able to solve abstruse questions in algebra, or settle difficult points in grammatical analysis. I have seldom known a school to be broken up, or to run down, or a teacher dismissed, because he did not know *great things*. It was rather because he did not *know*, or would not *do*, the little things. Follow, then, my method, or adopt something better. Have a plan, a settled plan; and do not begin, as I have known hundreds do, without any plan, either good or bad.

In the first place, let me say, bring your school to order; *bring your school to order*. Do not attempt to go on without order. I do not mean to say this must be done the first day, or completed even the first week, though its completion should not be deferred much longer than this. It should be done. Cost what it may, it must be done. It must be done before much else can be done; done before much progress can be made in education.

Arrange, then, classify and rank your pupils. Let every scholar have his class, his place, his seat, his desk, his hat-hook; and wherever you put him, there let him stay. Let your pupils soon discover, that you are a person of order, system, decision, authority; and that *your will*, and not *theirs*, must be done.

Many will think, after all, that these things are of little moment; that the mere attitude of a boy, the style of his desk, and movements, and his general appearance, cannot make one hair white or black, in regard to the character of the school. But this is all a mistake. After many years' experience and observation, I am satisfied that from these things, the school takes, in a great measure, its tinge and coloring. They have an *immediate* influence upon the condition of the school. But they are especially important in the formation of the habits and future character of the pupils. In this view, no enlightened, thoughtful, conscientious teacher can lightly regard them.

Again; determine on a course of studies, an order of exercises, and times for reciting. Let these be announced; adhere to them rigidly yourself, and require a compliance from all your pupils. So methodized should your school be, so familiar with all its operations should every pupil make himself, that, when absent, any one may know what is going on in the schoolroom, and *what and where* his own lesson will be, when he shall return to school the next day, or the next week. If you are systematic, you will see your work before you. You will know, at any time, at what stage you are; what has been done, and what is to be done, and when all will be finished. This will save not a little labor, and perplexity, and fatigue, and waste of time; and it will contribute mightily to the order and quiet of the schoolroom, and the improvement and happiness of your pupils.

What *measures* you should adopt, to what *motives* you should appeal, in governing and teaching a school, whether to fear and the rod, or to favor and the hope of reward, I shall not now stop to consider. I would only say now, be fully persuaded in your own mind, and whatever you

fix upon, give it a fair trial before abandoning it for something else. You must not expect any system will be without its difficulties and objections. All you can hope for is, to light upon a plan of which the advantages will far outweigh the evils.

P. C.

AMUSEMENT AND LEARNING.

This is the age of amusements. At a time when men become children, and seek for tinsel, and toys, and rare excitements, till novelty in their production has put invention to the rack, it surely is less strange than lamentable, that children feel themselves licensed to repudiate every thing which is not decidedly amusing, as decidedly intolerable.

It was not thus in the days of our fathers. They honestly believed,—and acted accordingly,—that life was given us, to be enjoyed, indeed, but that it had duties as well as pleasures, and severity of requisition as well as diverting relaxations. They may have erred, by carrying the severe to an excess;—and we, in striving to correct their error, are steering wide of the golden mean, to the opposite extreme.

Which of these courses is wisest, it would require wisdom to decide; but which is safest for public order, social happiness, and intellectual vigor, to say nothing of the high requirements of religion, we think can admit of no doubt in any sober, reflecting mind.

The tendency of the whole system now most popular in the instruction and improvement of youth, is to relax, not strengthen,—to deteriorate rather than benefit their mental and moral nature. Every thing must be done for pleasure, not duty;—for present gratification, not for ultimate advantage. Their school books must, as far as possible, be amusing stories. Knowledge must be granulated to particles so small, and diluted to a consistency so thin, that it can be swallowed insensibly, or else it is thought it cannot be digested at all. It is curious to listen to the inquiries of children, and their childish parents, in reference to a new study or a new book proposed for them. “Is it interesting? Will my child be pleased with it? Is there no danger of its being thought dull?”—just as though the tasking of the mental powers to any thing not amusing, was either impossible or injurious. As you train the child, you form the man;—and what shall perpetuate the strong and stern principles of duty, if you thus cater to a vicious and enervating love of ease,—of mere amusement?—*Rev. Dr. Babcock.*

The brilliant fame sometimes acquired by young men, is an injury to them rather than a benefit. It quells exertion, instead of stimulating it; so that they accomplish less, while the public demands more. They regard their reputation, as capital from which they are to receive a constant revenue of praise; while the public regard it only as conferring the right of enormous taxation. They place it on the credit side of their account, as so much due from the world to them; but public expectation places it on the debit side, as proof of so much due from them to the world. Hence it is, that early promises of talent are so often broken.

A DAY IN SCHOOL.

[For the Common School Journal.]

Let the day begin with a few strains of solemn and sweet music, to soothe the feelings, and elevate the thoughts, and compose the mind to the frame of study. Let a short passage from the New Testament or the Old, follow ; and, if the teacher can engage in it sincerely and reverently, an act of worship ; for the first object of education should be to train the higher sentiments. To the same end, let occasion be always taken, of every violation of the laws of kindness, of truth, or of justice, to enforce their obligation, not in a spirit of faultfinding and severe rebuke, but in such a tone of benevolence as shall be a living example of the lesson taught. Let a constant appeal be made to the sense of right which exists in every heart. That appeal is never made in vain, and the heart responds to it more surely and earnestly, the more earnestly and frequently it is made. Let a spirit of the highest generosity be habitually shown by the teacher. There is never too much of it in the world, and in no part of the world is it more in requisition than in the midst of the political contests, and the eager struggles for wealth and distinction, to which our freedom will always give scope. It is one of the secrets of easy and pleasant government in a school ; for there is nothing to which the child's heart more naturally answers than generosity. The statutes of the Commonwealth have made it the duty of the teacher to impress on the minds of children these and the "other virtues which are the ornament of human society." How shall he do it ? The great answer is,—by sympathy. Let him exhibit them in his own character. In no other way can he teach them ; for they belong to the heart, more than to the head. How important, then, is, not only the moral character, but the tone of the character, of the instructor ! Those committee men are right therefore,—and there are many of them who declare it is their wish always to do it,—who have a particular reference to the urbanity of deportment of the teacher, and his power of winning the affections of his pupils. A teacher should be a person of enlarged sympathies. Dry, unhearty lectures upon the moral virtues are the most profitless of all preaching. A kind word, or kind tone, or kind look, may do more to teach them than all the homilies that ever were uttered. Men must often have their hearts reached through their heads. Children are truer to God's workmanship, and we must reach their head through their heart. This must be thought of in the preparation of the future teachers of the Commonwealth. There must be a deep religious tone in the character of those who are to assist in forming them ; and we rejoice to know that, in the Normal Schools that have gone into operation, this essential element has not been forgotten.

While the moral influences of the school should be such as to kindle all the purer sympathies and move to action the higher sentiments, the literary exercises should be arranged to call out all the faculties. The powers of observation should be exercised, not on words alone, not on the images of things in books, but on realities. Hence the necessity of the study of some, at least, of the branches of Natural History. Hence the necessity of apparatus of all kinds to which the means of the school can extend : of specimens, when they can be procured, of objects in

the several kingdoms of nature; of figures and pictures to supply the place of these; of models. What a beautiful, and interesting, and *useful* substitute for, or introduction to, the *tables* of weights and measures, would the weights and measures themselves be! Let an instructer exhibit the foot scale, divided into inches, the yardstick, the measuring rod or chain, and see whether the child would find that table a dull or unintelligible one. Let the committee cause a post or stake to be set down at the distance of one furlong from the schoolhouse door, on each of the roads leading thence, and a mile-stone at the end of a mile on each, and see what definite notions children will have of distances all their life after. Let some portion of the wall of a schoolroom be marked distinctly with a square foot, divided into square inches, and a square yard divided into feet; let a portion of the play-ground, or front yard, be marked into square rods, and if the space be large enough, an acre be enclosed, or clearly bounded, and observe what exactness will be given to their ideas of the measures of surface. So let a cubic inch, and cubic block of a foot, marked and divisible, at least partly, into cubic inches, be among the apparatus of every school. So let there be metallic measures of gills, pints, quarts, and gallons, and wooden measures of quarts, pecks, half-bushels, and bushels, and the unintelligible tables will be converted into things full of interest, and that too to the youngest children.

The powers of comparing and judging may be exercised by suitable questions on these very objects; and on the objects in the cabinet, if there is one, of Natural History. Still higher exercises may be furnished by the lessons on language, and by the events and characters of history.

The faculty for narrative,—a faculty apparently distinct from those which we have mentioned,—will find pleasant and profitable exercise in describing, in exact order, the events and objects that occur to a child on his way to school; and in hearing a story, or giving an account of it, orally, or on his slate, or on paper; or in writing out what can be remembered of a portion of history just read,—an exercise far more useful than committing it to memory, as is often practised.

The power of reckoning has, already, not too great, perhaps, but a very disproportionate degree of exercise in the attention usually paid to arithmetic. We would not diminish this. Mental arithmetic is the most beautiful exercise that was ever introduced into a school. To one who has been always accustomed to the ancient mechanical processes of arithmetic, the effect produced on a class faithfully drilled in Colburn's golden little book, is hardly short of miraculous. If he had left nothing else, the author of that book would deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance as a benefactor to his race.

For the severer processes of logic, for the power of fixing the eye intently, and keeping it without wavering, upon one line, till it is traced to the end, we have geometry, whose use, for this purpose, is as old at least as Bacon. It is melancholy to see this noblest of the mathematical sciences degraded from its high office of ministering thus to the reason, to the poor and humble duty of serving as a door-keeper to the abstruser calculus, which, excellent as it is in its place, can never be of practical use to one of a thousand of those who are introduced to it.

GOOD NEWS FROM CAMBRIDGE.

[The following extracts from the Report of the School Committee of the Town of Cambridge show that they have done well, during the last year, and are intending to do still better, for the year to come. ED.]

The public sentiment of the town is turning with new interest and confidence to our public schools. This is evident from the circumstance that many parents are withdrawing their children from the private, and placing them in the public schools. In May, 1840, there were but 1,140 children in the public schools; there are now in these schools 1,388, showing an increase, in ten months, of 248. By comparing the sums paid for private instruction in the years 1839 and 1840, we find this remarkable change. In 1839 there were \$9,111 paid for private instruction, while in 1840 there were but \$6,484,—a decrease of \$2,627. But the town appropriated that year only the same sum it had the year previous for instruction, namely, \$6,500. There was then paid nearly \$3,000 less for the same instruction. Ought we not to increase our appropriation with the increase of scholars, transferred from the private to the public schools? Is it not reasonable that the town grant at least \$2,000 more to supply the \$2,627 withdrawn from the private schools?

* * * *

We have spoken of the disposition of parents to withdraw their children from the private and place them in the public schools. We witness this change with no ordinary satisfaction. It is our opinion that the Common Schools should be common, not only by privilege, but by use. We believe, from our own observation, that generally,—there are many laudable exceptions, it is true,—but in the large majority of cases, both the discipline and the instruction of our public schools are better than those of the private ones. An undue regard to popular favor is apt to relax the government of academies and private schools, while a disposition, often seen in them, to learn too many branches, encourages a superficial mode of instruction.

We believe also that the social effect of our public schools is much in their favor. Here are seen, seated side by side, the children of the rich and the poor, the honored and the obscure. It is here merit alone which receives commendation. The good scholar is the only object of favor. Let him come from the parlor, he is not noticed and favored for that circumstance alone; nor is he looked down upon because his home is humble. Can such schools fail to equalize the feelings of our children? Are they not truly republican institutions?

Nor is the moral influence of the public schools less important than the social. They tend to foster mutual kindness and respect between the children of our common Father. They recognize that great principle on which Providence proceeds,—the bringing of all, good and evil, into daily contact, the good being thus called to elevate their moral inferiors, and the evil being aided to reform by the example and advice of the good.

It is better economy also for a town to unite its resources chiefly in the common schools, than to divide them between these and the private ones. During the year preceding May 1, 1840, there were \$6,484 expended in this town for the education of 504 children in the acad-

emies and private schools,—that is, nearly \$13 per year, or 28 cents per week, for each scholar; while the expense of educating 1,140 in the public schools was only \$6,609,—that is, a little less than \$6 per year, or 12 cents per week, for each scholar. Now, if the *same* benefits, both as respects instruction and discipline, were received from the private as from the public schools, is it not desirable to curtail this enormous pecuniary sacrifice? Give us two thirds the excess of the cost of private over public instruction, and we pledge ourselves so to elevate the common schools, that they shall satisfy every reasonable demand made upon them. But if we have more scholars, with but the same means of education, our task is hard indeed. Let the straw be furnished,—then, and then only, require the bricks. * * *

In approaching the conclusion of their Report, your committee would notice with satisfaction the prosperous condition of the schools. They have been, we think, for several years in a state of progress. The committee have adopted a printed code of regulations, a copy of which is given to each teacher; and, so far as practicable, they have been sent to the parents. The system of gradation has been gradually matured, and is believed to be the best, with perhaps one or two exceptions, now existing in the entire Commonwealth. It has often been noticed abroad in a manner to give just pride to our citizens. The teachers have, from time to time, as changes were made, been usually of an improving description. Our schoolhouses, those which have been erected within the few past years, have been large, commodious, and neat. They have been somewhat expensive, especially by the introduction of chairs into several of the rooms. But this improvement has already shown that a good article is always the cheapest.

We feel it due to our present teachers to say, that, in general, they have devoted themselves faithfully to their work, the past year. They have shown a determination not only to "keep," but to *teach*, the several schools committed to their care.

We observe with great pleasure that they have established the practice of holding frequent meetings for mutual improvement. By conversation on their plans, difficulties, and means of success, as well as by exercises in reading, composition, &c., they have derived perceptible advantage from these meetings. We hope they may be continued, and prove an increasing stimulant to fidelity, and an aid to success in the art both of instruction and discipline in the schoolroom.

The committee are happy in noticing another means of usefulness to our schools, devised, and in part carried into execution, by the teachers. We allude to the series of lectures upon Common Schools, which have been given in this town by request of the teachers. It is proposed to continue them the present year; and we hope the notice of them may be such as to call out the parents of our children throughout the town. In no way can an evening be passed more profitably than in listening to a discourse on the great subject of education. Let us not feel that we already understand all that can be said on this topic. If "Reports" and facts can be trusted, there was never a period in the history of our Commonwealth, when so many new thoughts and suggestions were being given to the people on this all-important subject, trite and dull though we may deem it, as the present.

But while we thus commend the body of our teachers, we can see

room for improvement among them. What we have said is not intended to lull them into indolence, but to encourage them, by their past progress, to make still greater efforts. It is not yet felt how arduous the task of a faithful teacher is. Not only must he have knowledge, but an aptness to teach, or to impart that knowledge. Teaching is an art, and as such requires constant study. No more can one dispense with labor in perfecting himself for this service, than the artist can chisel or paint without toil, or the carpenter, who has never served a full apprenticeship, build a good house. A teacher, who does not observe and profit by his experience, is likely, the longer he is in school, the more negligent and incompetent to become.

Especially should a teacher cultivate his moral nature. In this connection we cannot but advert to the topic of manners. It has often been said, that manners are morals. We cannot but feel the truth of this remark in relation to our schools. It is not a matter of secondary importance that a teacher should cultivate mildness, gentleness, pleasant tones, and kind looks, in the schoolroom. We regard it as of vital moment, so much so, that we should deem it our duty to remove a teacher for deficiency in this respect, however he or she might excel in the art of instruction. Order must be secured in a schoolroom; but we may not resort to rudeness, violence, ungentlemanly or unlady-like *means* to enforce order. This is to sacrifice a prime virtue to convenience. Let the teacher make no gestures, adopt no tones, use no language which he would not propagate among his scholars. If he have that influence which his office requires of him, he cannot but be daily forming the manners of his scholars by his own. All that is prescribed by lessons upon courtesy will be worse than lost, if the teacher be not himself or herself a model of good manners.

A want of conscientiousness is a capital defect in one charged with the care of the young. He, who will neglect his school whenever the eye of the committee is not upon him, or when he can conceal his criminality from the parents of his scholars, is, of all persons, the last who should be intrusted with a school. No amount of learning, no skill in instruction, should induce a committee to employ one, who, keeping no good conscience himself, cannot but shed a moral blight on the minds and hearts of the children in his care. * * * *

The committee have noticed with great satisfaction the frequent visits of parents the last year at the quarterly examinations of the schools. In the first ward, and at the High and Grammar Schools, particularly in the second ward, they observed at the recent examination an unusual number of visitors. Let this practice extend still further. We hope the time may come, when we shall meet on these occasions as large an audience as we see in the church. Why should we not see this? Have our citizens any concern of superior moment to the intellectual and moral condition of the coming generation? Could we witness a zeal in this cause even to be compared with the interest exhibited about dogmas of belief, which often touch not the heart and life, or about the success of this, and the defeat of that, candidate for political office, we should ask no more. And where, if not on this spot, hallowed by the labors of our pilgrim fathers, who provided for learning before they had sheltered their homes from the savage and provided bread for the morrow,—where, if not in the far-famed and far-favored town of Cambridge, should be prosecuted the noble work of giving a good Common-School education to every child that enjoys the rich light of day?

OUR COMMON SCHOOLS.—No. XIII.

[From the Norfolk Democrat.]

MR. EDITOR: We have now closed nearly all our winter schools. We have passed through another period of great importance to our children. They have been subjected to influences, the effects of which will be felt through their whole lives. We can do no better than to look back upon our course, and consider the character of some of these influences. From the considerations of the past, we may learn lessons for the regulation of our future conduct.

The first of these influences is obviously that of the teacher. We are beginning to understand, that the character, condition, and progress of a school, depend mainly on the character of the teacher. In times past, we have too much neglected this consideration; and have been too willing to believe that a teacher, by virtue of his office, would necessarily advance and promote the interests of his scholars. Experience has dissipated that delusion. The fruits of experience have in so many cases been bitter, that we begin to examine more closely the soil on which they grow. We begin to feel a deeper interest in the character and qualifications of the man to whom we commit the early culture of the minds of our youth. And the more keenly we inspect the elements that compose the character of a good teacher,—the more familiar we are with the practical results of the teacher's influence upon a school,—so much the more clearly do we perceive the necessity of elevating the standard of professional ability. The office of a teacher is daily acquiring new importance. New demands are made upon him. Greater attainments are required. Better fruits are looked for. We cannot be satisfied that our children should pass through merely the same discipline that we experienced,—that they should receive only the same instructions, and make only the same proficiency. We demand a higher culture, a more thorough furnishing of our youth for the duties of life. And how shall that culture be imparted, unless it first exist in the teacher?

When we survey the great body of teachers, so far as they come under our observation, it is gratifying to see the evidence of their consciousness of the existence of this want. They feel the necessity of raising themselves up to the more elevated standard which public opinion has erected. They make greater efforts to fulfil the duties of their station. They are encouraged to do so by more powerful motives than have been wont to influence them. I mean, increased wages, and the support and coöperation of their employers. If we give generous wages, and institute a minute and regular examination into the progress of the school, teachers will feel that duty and interest alike urge them to faithful and persevering efforts.

During the winter, I have carefully noticed the progress of several schools in this vicinity, and have become more than ever convinced, that the only pledge of success is the character of a competent teacher. One school was run down to the lowest point. There was scarcely any thing left of industry or interest in its studies. It was committed to a man admirably qualified, and its character rose at once. A new life was breathed into it. The scholars were inspired with such a zeal for study, such a love of learning, that the ordinary school hours did not suffice for their industry. At its close, it more than justified the

expectations which had been formed at its commencement. Other schools have exhibited more extensive attainments, but could not show a more active and faithful application to study, nor a better use of advantages. This teacher makes no pretensions to extensive learning, but he has, what is far more useful in our Common Schools, a thorough and familiar acquaintance with what he does know, and a tact and readiness in communicating it. These are the elements of success.

In another school, we had a teacher of respectable and amply sufficient literary attainments, who failed of *that degree* of success, which the commencement of the school promised. The cause was obvious. There was no tact,—no aptness to teach,—at least, not to the extent that was necessary. This is a deficiency which no examination by the committee can detect. Experience alone will bring out the peculiarities of character. Actual employment is the only thing that can show a teacher's fitness for his business. And this consideration should be kept in mind by prudential committees. If they have had a good teacher, they must not fail to engage him again in season. And they can judge of his goodness by his aptness to teach as well as by any other criterion. There are many advantages arising from the employment of the same teacher in the same school for successive winters,—advantages too obvious to require a statement here.

Other qualifications may be ascertained by examination; but the existence of the power to communicate knowledge, in an easy and familiar manner, can be known only by employment in the school. If districts have had a man well qualified in this respect, let them hold on to him, and engage him again even at increased wages. The Secretary of the Board of Education, in his report, just published, says,—

“The next principal qualification in a teacher is the *art of teaching*. This is happily expressed in the common phrase, *aptness to teach*. The ability *to acquire* and the ability *to impart* are wholly different talents. The former may exist in the most liberal measure, without the latter. The ability to acquire is the power of understanding the subject-matter of investigation. Aptness to teach involves the power of perceiving how far a scholar understands the subject-matter to be learned, and what, in the natural order, is the next step he is to take. It involves the power of discovering and of solving, at the same time, the exact difficulty, by which the learner is embarrassed. How much does the pupil comprehend of the subject? What should his next step be? Is his mind looking towards a truth, or an error? The answer to these questions must be intuitive in the person who is apt to teach.”

On this subject, as on many others, the Report of the Secretary is full and satisfactory, and deserves to be read by every teacher and parent;—by the teacher, that he may see what is expected of him in the present advanced state of the art of teaching; by the parent, that he may learn the primary importance of securing, for the next winter, the services of a teacher who has given proof that he understands his business,—who can do something besides communicate just what the text-book contains,—and who knows how to adapt his instructions to the various capacities and conditions of his pupils. A teacher thus qualified will do more for a school in three months, than a man qualified *merely in regard to literary attainments*, could do in six. It is not too early to be thinking of engaging good teachers. They are as important to our schools as the interest we feel in the progress and prospects of our children.

Yours, &c.

J. M. M.

[Extract from the Christian Review for March, 1841.]

[If the doctrine expressed in the following extract is politically sound, but if, at the same time, there is not the slightest ground to expect that our Legislature will carry it into practice, how imperative is the obligation upon all good men to leave no means of persuasion or inducement untried, by which the now neglected and forgotten children of the State, may be led to attend school! ED.]

The founders of this Commonwealth assumed it as a sound political maxim, that a certain degree of education is necessary in all, that each one may be able for himself to discharge the duties of a good citizen; and that, therefore, the State had a right to require that degree of education in all. They not only furnished the means by which all might be educated, provided they were disposed to avail themselves of those advantages, but actually compelled parents and guardians to give that measure of education to their children. While, however, the Legislature assumed thus much, it protected with equal care the republican principle. It gave to the towns, and subsequently to precincts, the entire control of the business of education. The Legislature only concerned itself to know that all were suitably instructed, leaving the education of each child to those whom it concerned.

Our system of education, as at present modified, seems to us deficient in this particular. We have a provision requiring the parent to furnish his child with books, if he send him to school, and have the means of doing so, but no provision requiring him to send his child to school. Children uninstructed upon the subject, do not generally appreciate the advantages of education to themselves; and inasmuch as there are many worthless parents, who entirely neglect their children, it has seemed to us important that the government should require that every child of common abilities should receive a given amount of schooling. Nor can we perceive that such a requirement would be a greater encroachment on personal liberty than the law now in force requiring the parent, if able, to furnish his child with books. If the parent is unable to support his child, while he is being educated, let it be done at the expense of the town. Without some such provision, we see not how we can prevent the growth of a population, already quite too numerous, that can neither read nor write.* The good citizens of this Commonwealth, who are required to provide means whereby every child may be educated, have a right to expect of the Legislature that every child shall be educated.

* By the census of 1840, it appears that there are in Massachusetts 3,196 persons, under 20 years of age, who can neither read nor write. Though the majority of them are probably foreigners, and although, in this respect, Massachusetts may bear a favorable comparison with most of the other States, the number is nevertheless quite too large.

If parents would spend more time in instilling right principles of action into the minds of their children, they would need to spend much less in teaching them right rules for external conduct.

Every lesson is to be taught until it is learned.

[From the British and Foreign Medical Review, No. XVIII.]

The mind of the infant, on its entrance into the world, has been compared by some to a sheet of white paper, on which the educator may impress any thing he pleases. We by no means coincide with this doctrine; since it supposes that there is no variety of mental *capability*, at this period, amongst different individuals; but still there is much truth in it. We are convinced that the intellectual education of the infant should begin with its moral training; and that both these are closely connected, in the early years of infancy, with attention to its physical development. Nothing, for example, is more prejudicial to the future temper of the child than the habit, so common amongst indulgent mothers, of putting it to the breast as often as it cries. The habit of indulgence, once commenced, is seldom or never discontinued; and the evil extends itself into every part of the character. But such a matter is rather foreign to our present purpose; and we have referred to it only in illustration of our principle, that the influence exercised on the powers and tendencies of the mind, at the period of their first development, is more important than any which can be put in operation at a subsequent period. Now, in directing our attention to intellectual education, we notice that the first-developed powers of the infant's mind are those connected with *observation*. And the rationale of this is obvious. The intellect at that period may be compared to a seed. It is in a state of dormant capability. It possesses faculties which need to be called into activity; and as warmth, moisture, and oxygen, arouse the energies of the germ, and cause it to exert those powers with which it is endowed, so as to develop itself into its perfect form, so do external objects operate on the mind. If all inlets to sensation were closed, we can scarcely imagine that any use could be made of its faculties. It would remain like the seed buried deeply beneath the ground. But as soon as it receives impressions from external objects, and ideas are excited within it, a series of changes or operations commences, which can only terminate with the loss of its powers.

The cultivation of the observing faculties, then, is the first branch of education in the order of time; and it is that which has the most general relation with all others. In no pursuit, no situation in life, will the habit of acute and correct observation be valueless.

BARRE NORMAL SCHOOL. The next term in this institution will commence on Wednesday, May 5. Though the Visiting Committee earnestly recommend to all joining the school, that they spend at least two terms, scholars will be admitted, as heretofore, for a single term.

S. P. NEWMAN, Principal.

Barre, March 29, 1841.

NORMAL SCHOOL AT LEXINGTON. The first term, of fifteen weeks, for the third year, will commence on Wednesday, the 5th day of May next.

April 10, 1841.

C. PEIRCE, Principal.

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